Group with minor modifications. Since then the estimates of poverty at national and State level are being made using the Expert Group methodology. The per capita consumption norm has been fixed at Rs. 49.09 per month in rural areas at 1973-74 prices at national level corresponding to a basket of goods and services anchored on a norm of per capita daily calorie requirement of 2400 kcal in rural areas. The prescribed per capita consumption expenditure limit in rural areas is then updated using State-specific cost of living indices for Agricultural Labourers (CPIAL) for rural areas. The national poverty line at 1999-2000 prices is Rs. 327.56 per capita per month in rural areas.

(e) The percentage of persons living below the poverty line in the country was 26.10 during 1999-2000, according to the 55th round of NSS Household Consumer Expenditure Survey. The corresponding figures are 27.09 and 23.62 for rural and urban areas respectively. The Planning Commission does not estimate the number of families living below poverty line.

Special package for States and farmers

†1761. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are contemplating to sanction a special package for Jammu & Kasnmir, North-Eastem States and farmers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof separately, for each?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) Government is not contemplating sanction of any special package for Jammu & Kashmir, North-Eastern States and farmers, in addition to the Reconstruction Plan for Jammu & Kashmir and development programmes for two North-Eastern States (Manipur& Assam) already announced during 2004.

(b) Question does not arise.

Identification of backward districts

†1762. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have not identified the backward districts;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) the action taken by Government for the observance of the guidelines issued for the development of the backward districts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) 147 districts have been identified for coverage under the Backward Districts Initiative of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana, initiated in the Tenth Five Year Plan.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Committees have been set up at the District, State and Central level to ensure adherence to the guidelines issued for the Backward Districts Initiative of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana.

Eradication of poverty and unemployment

1763. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have evolved an action plan to eradicate poverty and unemployment within a period often years; and

(b) if so, the present status of the extent of poverty and unemployment in the country, State-wise and the strategy and the details of the plan of action contemplated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) and (b) Reduction of poverty and providing gainful employment at least to the addition to the labour force are the two monitorable targets for the Tenth plan period and beyond. It is recognized that gainful employment can only come from robust growth of economy especially in labour using sectors.

Although growth has strong direct poverty-reducing effects, there is also a need to ensure equity and social justice. A three-pronged strategy for attaining equity and social justice along with high rates of growth was adopted in the Tenth Plan period:

- Agricultural development must be viewed as a core element of the Plan, since growth in this sector is likely to lead to the widest spread of benefits especially to the rural poor.
- The growth strategy of the Tenth Plan must ensure rapid growth of those sectors, which are most likely to create gainful employment opportunities and deal with the policy constraints, which discourage growth of employment. Particular attention must be paid^to the policy environment influencing a wide range of sectors,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.